



"WHEN TITANIA LEADS HER FAIRY DANCERS ABOUT THE HEADS OF LITTLE DREAMERS."

READING THE BOOK OF FATE.

BY LOUISE WILLIS SNEAD.

HALLOWE'EN is a festival that should be especially honored by young people. There are many amusing and good-natured tricks, and many innocent bits of "white magic" appropriate to the time, that no self-respecting youngster should allow its observance to be slighted by careless "grown-ups."

There, for instance, are the "snap-dragon," and the "bobbing for apples," and the blowing out of a candle hung at the end of a stick suspended on a twisted string and balanced by an apple so contrived as to deal a smart blow upon the cheek of the too lingering candle-blower. And there are the many charms and contrivances that, once consulted in honest faith by rustic lovers, are now the pastime of boys and girls during an autumn evening.

No doubt these charms and oracles are the relics of bygone superstitions, but there is no need to wait for that mystic hour of midnight when churchyards become sleepy and begin to waken, when the harvest moon is shining, and when Titania leads her band of fairy dancers about the heads of little dreamers, simply because old magicians preferred the "wee sma' hours." It will be quite as amusing to try to read fate in twilight, or early moonlight, and no doubt quite as efficacious. All children learn by the daytime ways of learning one's destiny, and I wish to tell you especially how Southern children "tell fortunes."

Living for nearly all the year round in the open air, with flowers and birds and insects for companions, the children of the South are in close touch with nature; and, naturally imbibing something of the superstitions of their dead and beloved black "mammies," they read "omens" in the simplest of nature's works. Taught also from infancy with the romantic lore of a Southern clime, every flower has a tale, every star holds a promise for the tiny little lads and lassies who build castles in the cloudland—and this same cloudland is a wonderful playground for them. The frequent

thunder-showers fill heaven's dome with great banks of syllabub, which change from luminous cumulus to cirrus and stratus; and the children discover wonderful forms that change as in a kaleidoscope before their eyes, each object presaging some future event which they plan according to their fancy. Of course each child knows the secrets the daisies tell—that custom lives wherever a daisy blows. The American children say, "He loves me, he loves me not," and the little French children say, "Il m'aime, un peu, passionnément, pas du tout," counting off the petals; and the little Southern children add, taking another daisy, "What is his profession? Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,—doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief," over and over until the petals are told.

No flowers in the world delight little people as do the old-fashioned "pretty-by-nights," or "four-o'clocks," those dear, delicious pink and yellow blossoms, which the children string on long grasses, twisting the "strings" into wreaths to crown one another. Whoever makes the longest wreath will be the "finest lady," and each little lad works for her he likes best; and they call the winner the "Princess," and deck her with bracelets, necklaces, and wreaths of "four-o'clocks," and dance about her till the shadows creep, when the little maids run home to their mamas, with strings of "pretty-by-nights." Then, when the new moon rises, each little girl steals to the vine-clad veranda and bows solemnly seven times, and makes a wish to the new moon. If the wish is "for somebody else," she will tell you, it "always comes true." But if no "moon be out to-night, love," then she will hail the first star, with:

"Starlight, star bright, first star I see to-night,
I wish I may, I wish I might,
Have the wish I wish to-night!"

Then she makes the wish deep down in her little heart, and *sometimes it comes true.*

I wish all children could know the joy of

"pulling love-grass." I have seen lawns and pleasure-grounds dotted with merry children pulling love-grass, amidst peals of laughter, for hours. I have never seen "love-grass" at the North. It has a glossy green stem crowned with brown or green aigrettes. Two children select the grass stem, split one of the ends, and each holds an end. Then they propound any question they wish to solve, and as they pull the stem apart gently, it forms either an N or a Y, meaning no or yes.

"Love-in-a-puff" is another fortune-teller; it gets its name from the fact that the tender little green puff holds three round seeds, each stamped with a perfect little heart. As in popping rose-petals, the answer depends on the report of the "Love-in-a-puff." If it be sharp and loud, the answer is decidedly "yes"; if it collapse noiselessly, that is a bad sign, meaning bad luck, or "no," as the question is put. The dandelion is another delight. If you can blow away all the little seeds at one breath, you can find the bags of gold at the ends of the rainbow.

The four-leaved clover is always a prize to Southern children, as to all others, for it is a universal talisman of good fortune, zealously sought the "wide world over."

There are three fortunes to be told with an apple. Peel the fruit without breaking the skin, and, holding the long spiral skin daintily by the end, swing it three times around the head, and let it fall to the ground; whatever letter the skin then forms, is the initial of the sweetheart or friend who loves you best. Then, before eating your apple, have some one "name it," as they say, and after you have saved all the seeds, begin to count them, thus:

One, I love; two, I love; three, I love, I say;
Four, I love with all my heart,
And five, I cast away.
Six, she loves; seven, he loves; eight, both love.
Nine, he comes; ten, he tarries.
Eleven, he courts, and twelve, he marries.

A more amusing fortune is that of placing a fresh apple-seed on each eyelid, and naming each. The one which remains there longest is the truest and best. A famous custom consists of pouring a very little molten

lead into a tub of cold water: there follows a splashing and hissing as the lead cools suddenly, and the shape of the lead reveals the future. Just as in all oracles, ever since the days of Delphi, and Diana of the Ephesians, the scientific work lies in reading the doubtful forecasts aright.

This game has whiled away many happy hours for Southern children on Hallowe'en and New Year's nights, and their young ambitions, hopes, and dreams help wonderfully to read the half-formed promises of the leaden emblems to their own satisfaction.

The little white flecks that sometimes appear on the finger-nails signify, beginning with the thumb, "A present, friend, foe, letter to write, journey to go," according to whichever finger one appears upon. The time-honored superstition of "blessing" one who sneezes originated years and years ago in England when a plague of influenza made superstitious persons bless all who sneezed, lest they die of the dreaded disease. A string of nursery rhymes makes even sneezing prophetic:

If you sneeze on Monday, you sneeze for danger,
If you sneeze on Tuesday, you 'll kiss a stranger;
If you sneeze on Wednesday, you sneeze for a letter,
If you sneeze on Thursday, for something better;
If you sneeze on Friday, you sneeze for sorrow,
If you sneeze on Saturday, you 'll see your sweet-heart to-morrow.
But if you sneeze on Sunday, your safety seek,
Or the goblins will have you the rest of the week!

For the days of the week Southern children often repeat this well-known jingle regarding birthdays:

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace;
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go;
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child must work for its living;
But the child that is born on the Sabbath day
Is blithe and bonny, and good and gay.

Here is a way to test your friends and enemies. Write any person's name below that of the one whose friendship you wish to prove, cancel all common letters, and repeat these words in counting off the uncanceled letters that remain in each name, thus: "Friendship, love, indifference, hatred." Here is an example

which shows clearly that George Washington had a feeling of friendship for Benjamin Franklin, while the latter's affection for the great chief-tain was strong enough to be called love :

George Washington . . . Friendship.
Benjamin Franklin . . . Love.

For the months of the year, regarding birth-days, there is a set of rhymes stating that he who wears the gem of his birth-month is insured all manner of happiness and good fortune, the stones being :

<i>January</i> Hyacinth.	<i>July</i> Onyx.
<i>February</i> Amethyst.	<i>August</i> Carnelian.
<i>March</i> Jasper.	<i>September</i> Chrysolite.
<i>April</i> Sapphire.	<i>October</i> Beryl.
<i>May</i> Agate.	<i>November</i> Topaz.
<i>June</i> Emerald.	<i>December</i> Ruby.

There are countless absurdities believed to presage ill-luck or good fortune, of which the following are well-known instances :

If you see a pin and pick it up,
 All through the day you 'll have good luck.
 But see a pin and let it lie,
 You 'll need a pin before you die.

"Sing before breakfast, you 'll weep before supper."

"Tell your dream before breakfast, it will come true."

"If you meet a cross-eyed person in the road, you will stumble on the way home; if you stumble on the way home, you won't be married this year."

"If you see a lone buzzard sailing aloft," or "if the scissors stick up in falling," somebody is coming—usually a safe prediction!

LAUNCHING A GREAT VESSEL.

BY FRANKLIN MATTHEWS.

A SUCCESSFUL launch of a large vessel has been called the crowning moment of a ship-builder's career. Some one has said also that launch is the most delicate part of a ship-builder's work. It is very difficult to say what the most delicate part of ship-building, for a simple reason that there does n't seem to be any part of it that is n't delicate. No more complex machinery is made than the wonderful marine engine; no more carefully designed structure exists than the hull of a modern steamship. A launch is as much a matter of mathematics as any part of the work of building a ship, and perhaps it is because launches are always inspiring that they have been called the crowning occasions of ship-building.

It is only since the United States began to build a new navy that we have had launches of large vessels in this country. We have built many fine war-ships that it was not unusually difficult for us to build merchant vessels of the same grade, and we have just finished two ships in size to the two largest ships that are afloat

in the world. Building these ships was a great achievement, however, and hence the ceremony of putting them into the water from dry land attracted great attention throughout the country, and was attended in each case by thousands of spectators. They saw the picturesque side of each of these events. They saw the foam as the christening bottle of wine was broken upon the bow. They heard the cheers and shouts, and helped to make them. They waved their hats and handkerchiefs as the ship began to glide down into the water, and each man almost held his breath until he saw her safe in the stream and acknowledging the plaudits of the multitude by making a graceful bow.

Impressive as the launch of a great vessel always is, it nevertheless seems a simple matter. All there is to do is to build two toboggan slides under the ship, raise her from the supports on which she has been resting, put a lot of tallow on the slides, and, when you are ready, saw loose the thick plank that holds the ship